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ABSTRACT

Changes are needed in certification standards for professionals in the health, physical education, and recreation fields. Because certification for individuals differs from program accreditation, which is already controlled by the profession, certification leadership structures must change. Until the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) takes the lead in setting standards for certification for each of the professional areas it serves, state agencies will continue to control inadequate or disjointed certification standards. State and federal agencies that often know little about area specializations will continue to establish directions, policies, and curricular content which will be interpreted as certification regulations by bureaucratic agencies. If national accreditation standards are developed and implemented by qualified professionals in program areas, AAHPERD should be able to determine qualifications necessary for individuals to practice within specialized areas. (JD)

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Certification Changes - Whose Leadership Role, Professional Preparation or State Directors?

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Who should provide the leadership in bringing about certification changes?

Underlying assumptions:

1. Changes are needed - certification standards as they now stand are inadequate.
2. Certification and accreditation are discrete entities or at least different though they may be related.
3. That professionals are dissatisfied with the present certification leadership structure.
4. Leadership need not mean monopoly of control without input from non AAHPERD resources.

Let's take a look at each of these assumptions as it relates to the question:

1. Certification changes are needed. The survey professional literature for the past 5 years revealed over 72 articles dealing with reviewing, instituting or changing present certification criteria. Such diverse areas as coaching, athletic training, para-professionals, special education, professional preparation, faculty, elementary, secondary, administration, sport and dance specialists, and health fitness specialists have all been discussed as areas that standards for certification criteria need to be established, reviewed, or changed.

In a 1980 poll of public attitudes toward public schools, citizens were asked to indicate 4 things that they thought were particularly important in

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the education of students. Of 14 suggestions listed the citizens' top priority was "Well-educated teachers and principals". Who knows and understands better than AAHPERD professionals in these areas what standards are necessary for professional competence and quality control of members in each of the professional areas served by AAHPERD? In Idaho the dance specialists provided leadership in determining dance specialist certification criteria. NASPE has had an ongoing study to set up criteria for certifying coaches. Other professional groups are studying or at least talking about the need for certification changes. Certification changes are needed and we as professionals are the ones to provide the leadership in determining what the standards should be.

2. Certification of individuals and accreditation of programs are different entities. Institutional accreditation is that evaluative process of member institutions by an organization of institutions (i.e., NCATE) in an attempt to keep its members accountable for the overall quality of the institutions in accordance with standards developed and approved by qualified professionals. Program or specialized accreditation is that procedure established by an organized profession to evaluate specific professional preparation programs within institutions in accordance to a set of qualifications and standards developed and approved by qualified professionals in the field of study.

Less than ½ of the professional preparation institutions in the U.S. are members of accrediting organizations though approximately 85% of the teachers are prepared in NCATE accredited institutions. But the main point here is that accreditation standards are set by profession. It is the only area of quality assurance controlled by the profession itself.

The other 2 areas that influence the quality of professional practitioners are certification and local employment. Both of these activities are controlled

by legal bodies composed of lay citizens. In the case of certification, with the exceptions of California, Oregon, and Minnesota, lay boards of education (or other state legal agencies) determine the competence of applicants and issue licenses for applicants to practice. As Doran Christensen noted in 1980, this is "a circumstance that would hardly be tolerated in any other profession". (JOPER, March, 1980, p. 44) As we have heard early this afternoon each state has different certification requirements which often are established or maintained as a result of political expendiency. It is true that the main culprit in applying political pressure for retaining the basic certification requirements in teaching for the last 50 years have been physical education professional preparation institutions within a state. Proposed changes that may aid in better evaluating skills and knowledges believed to be essential for qualified practitioners in an area are looked at in the light of their effect on job security, and enrollments in professional preparation institutions. Until our national association takes the lead in setting standards for certification for each of the professional areas it serves, State agencies will continue to control inadequate or disjointed standards of certification. State and federal agencies that often know little about area specializations and whose experiences in these areas are even less will continue to lay down directions, policies, and curricular content which inturn will be interpreted into regulations for certification by beaurocratic agencies. If national accreditation standards are developed and implemented by qualified professionals in program areas, certainly our association should be able to determine the qualifications necessary for individuals to practice within each specialization area.

3. Professionals within specialization areas are dissatisfied with the present certification leadership structure. In many areas the teaching certification process occurs in stages - probationary or permanent. At the initial

level some states have instituted tests that implicity or explicitly measure academic ability. Professional researchers have long quarreled with the assumption that measures of academic ability can predict teaching ability. A 1979 North Carolina study found that those who enter teaching scored less well on measures of academic ability than did prospective teachers of the past. The study also found that there was a high correlation between measured academic ability and retention in teaching. Those individuals scoring highest on the NTE tended to remain in teaching for the shortest length of time. Thus when the public claims that there has been a decline in academic competence of teachers there may be some merit to their claims. What the North Carolina study did not establish was the relationship between scores on the NTE and teaching competence. But as long as state legislatures and others in positions to influence policy believe that there is a linear relationship between teaching competence and academic ability as measured by the NTE or similar tests, there will be a continuance of certification based primarily on scores on this or similar exams. In physical education we may determine that demonstrated physical skills performance and class management skills are also necessary for potential teacher competence. If in fact there is a relationship between performance and teaching competence we as members of the profession need to determine these competencies.

4. Leadership in bringing about certification changes involves receiving input from many resources prior to implementing certification standards in any specialist area. Florence Grebner in her June, 1981 JOPERD article asserted that in principle credentialing functions best under a partnership structure that would include professional preparation institutions, representatives of the market, and the government. She also noted that though this partnership may sound good in principle in reality each resource area is jockeying for

control of the certification process. Implicit in the term "leadership" is the term "power". Power to bring about change, power to influence actions, and power to control. It is not my duty today to outline how that "power" or leadership should be exerted even though each of us here would like to have more of that elusive power.

But leadership in establishing certification criteria and the quality of professional practitioners are the functions of the profession not the state, or of professional preparation institutions, or of the employers. Opportunities for input at all levels of decision making in establishing, maintaining, and controlling certification should be provided for all internal and external constituencies of the professional specialist.

But you may assert that as long as the state legislature controls the purse strings of education they will not relinquish control over the determining and enforcing standards they have set up. That states have long mandated the right of leader power over education standards and practices with the states. Let's take a closer look at what has happened that assumed right during the past few years. Traditionally local boards of education having autonomy in determining policy making and day-to-day decisions such as funding, teacher employment and dismissal, curriculum, and supervision of instruction. But during the last decade local board autonomy has diminished with the rise of a new super board of education - the state legislature. With the increased federal role in education, Congress has used its power of taxation to raise and expend public funds to meet various "general welfare" needs of U.S. society. Complying with regulations for the use of federal funds has become a way of life for most of us in education. Acts which directly affect our profession and its members include Title IX, Title VI, PL. 94-142, Teacher/Student rights, equatible funding, student assistance and load programs, and segregation. The states

are required to monitor local education agencies to insure compliance with regulations of its grant programs. When the Reagan "block grant" system for allocating federal funds goes into effect the role of State Boards of Education will be even stronger.

At the same time increased published discontent with the quality of education of students has become rampid. The public is demanding increased quality of teaching and better prepared teachers. When a survey asked citizens for their top priority on education of students 50% of those questioned responded "well-educated teachers". When asked if teachers should be required to spend 1 year as interns in the schools at ½ pay before they are given a certificate to teach 56% answered yes. The State Boards of Education do hear both the criticisms and suggestions of the public. Physical educators also are vehemently asserting with considerable justification, that accusations by various groups that we do not police our own ranks are unfair and that the agencies that certify and here teachers must take the responsibility for permitting unqualified physical educators to enter and to remain in the teaching field. Only when we as a profession have the authority in determining the standards to be used in certification and assuring ungoing quality of performance of our members can we be expected to accept the responsibility for the competence of our members. I, as a member of this very viable profession, am convinced that we are and must accept responsibility for providing and maintaining high standards for the members of our specialist areas. The components of those standards and the enforcement (control) of those standards can best be determined by the members of our profession. Leadership, power, control, and responsibility are necessary integrated components of bringing about change. It's time we assume responsibility through use of the other three components in bringing about changes in our present disjointed certification standards and

processes. The disparity between state certification procedures and standards between states, the diversity of methods of determining certification, and the politics between in state interest groups have for too long fragmented certification standards. We must grapple with these problems as a profession if we want to bring some sanity to the procedures and upgrade the quality of the entering and continuing members of the profession. Hopefully we will form a partnership with the state certification agencies to utilize their long based and valuable experience in certification procedures. We within our profession are not wanting for effective leaders - to these leaders (you and me) we have a job to do. To our state directors - help us get on with the job.